

# The Record Flood of '09 at Rose Creek

By ERIC HANSEN

*Superintendent, Rose Creek Golf Course  
and Prairiewood Golf Course*

I was walking back to my hotel room in San Diego when I listened to the message from Jack Mackenzie, the editor of *Hole Notes*, asking if I would write an article about the flooding on our course in 2009. Snow, flooded rivers and giant earthen levees seemed so far away while attending the GCSAA Conference.

Rose Creek Golf Course is located in Fargo, North Dakota and is one of the Fargo Park District's five public courses. It is an 18-hole course bordered on the north by its namesake, Rose Creek, and by homes on the west and south. The creek flows into the Red River which flows north to Lake Winnipeg. We have had several floods since it was built in 1991 but nothing like the record-setting spring of 2009.

**When the Red River floods, it backs up into Rose Creek**, or Rose Coulee as it is called on flood maps. Most spring floods are just nuisance floods for us as it covers one fairway, a couple tee boxes and our lowest green. Normally the turf is still dormant and the temperatures are cold enough that it recovers after washing the silt off with pumps and hoses. During a few major flood events in the past temporary clay or sandbag dikes had to be built in low areas to prevent the flood waters from crossing the course and flooding homes in South Fargo. After a very wet fall and above normal snowfall we were anticipating some damage from the dikes and a lot of washing that spring. On March 19th when I heard the prediction of a record level for the river I pulled out an elevation map left over from a previous flood and looked at the 40 foot flood line. I remember thinking that to protect the homes around us they would have to build a dike diagonally across half the course, and there is no way they would do that. The next day we were plowing and blowing snow away from the path of the planned levee with skid steer loaders and tractor blowers. We tried to locate and mark drains and irrigation despite being buried in feet of ice and snow. Greens and tees close to the path were staked off with rope or marked with orange traffic cones.

**The plan was for the Army Corps of**



*Irrigation repair was a consequence of the flood.*

**Engineers to use private contractors** to haul all the clay in that was needed for the levee. On March 21st they began hauling in material and shaping the dike. It quickly became clear that due to heavy rains and the river rising faster than expected that it couldn't be completed in time if all the clay was to be hauled in from another site. The decision was quickly made to start mining clay right out of the driving range to save time in hauling. The damage to the golf course would be minor compared to the possible loss of all those homes. Unfortunately even this didn't seem to save enough time. By March 23rd five track excavators were following the path that we marked and doing what they called "dig and dump." They would dig pits approximately fifteen feet deep and dump the clay in piles while bulldozers would shape and level it. The operators did their best to avoid the greens but there was no way to avoid the other vital parts of the golf course. Tees, fairways, bunkers and the driving range all suffered major damage. Irrigation, power, communication, 15-inch drain lines and even satellite boxes were destroyed in the process. Several of the equipment operators were

regular golfers at Rose Creek and were as upset as our crews were at the unavoidable damage.

The important thing is that the dike was completed in time and held for the duration of the flood. The Red River reached a new record crest in Fargo on March 28 at a level of 40.84 feet which is 22.84 feet above our official flood stage. That left us with six complete holes and seven greens covered with water.

Normally, we would start washing the silt off the turf as soon as the river begins receding. On March 31st just as some greens started coming out of the water Fargo was hit with another ten inches of snow and temperatures well below freezing and there wasn't much we could do but wait for warmer weather.

Eventually, we were able to start washing greens and tees and pumping out the pits to access the damages. It was soon obvious that with all the clean-up and repairs needed to the recreation facilities in Fargo that were affected by the flood that we didn't have the manpower and equipment needed to repair Rose Creek on our own.

*(Continued on Page 15)*



## ***Flood at Rose Creek-***

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By the end of April we had a golf course contractor on site to help with the repairs. They began removing the dike and filling up the holes on the estimated 18 acres that had been disturbed. Obvious damage to the irrigation and wiring was repaired while other breaks would have to wait to be fixed until we could get water in the system. Our golf maintenance crews, led by assistants Ryan Stalboerger and Joel Sperl, continued to wash turf and clean up debris as the river dropped. We had opened nine holes that weren't affected by the levee or the flood two weeks earlier so they had the normal spring work to take care of on those holes also.

*(Continued on Page 17)*



*Pumping holes to check for damage to utilities.*



*Dikes were formed to protect parts of the course and neighboring houses.*

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*Damaged greens and fairways at Rose Creek after the flood.*



*Parts of the course were disturbed in order to build the dikes.*

## ***Flood at Rose Creek-***

*(Continued from Page 15)*

On May 3rd the water finally dropped below our last green, after being covered for six weeks. Within a few days it was dry enough to get light equipment on. We spiked it several times but ended up losing the entire green as well as part of a fairway and one set of tees. They were all reseeded as soon as they had dried out enough to work on. The weather did not cooperate with us much that spring as it stayed very wet and cool. Our crew would seed areas as soon as the contractor was finished with the reconstruction but it was taking longer than we had hoped. By the end of June the dike was gone, all the damaged cart paths had been replaced and the irrigation was all finally pressurized and holding. There was still some seeding to be done but the crews had done a fantastic job of getting the course back in shape.

Looking out the window now at the huge piles of snow make me wonder what this spring will be like. Red River flood forecasts came out today and they don't sound very optimistic. Moisture levels and weather patterns similar to last year could make this another interesting summer.

## ***Musing the Minutes***

By **MATT McKINNON**  
*MGCSA Secretary*

The MGCSA Board of Directors met at Keller Golf Course on January 26, 2010.

President Paul Diegnau, CGCS, welcomed Joe Churchill, Roger Stewart, CGCS, Bill Gullicks and Jake Ryan to the Board. Diegnau also reported that University of Minnesota sent a thank you for the first installment of \$10,000 of the \$50,000 Endowment.

Under new business Diegnau brought up the Executive Director's Compensation. After discussion, Rick Traver, CGCS, made a motion to increase Turtinen Communications salary by 3%. The Board approved.

Treasurer Paul Eckholm, CGCS, reported that MGCSA budgeted for 2009 to break even but we will actually make about \$4,600. Dues revenue was down \$10,000. Board approved Treasurer's Report.

Executive Director Scott Turtinen reported that, as of January 26, MGCSA Affiliate sponsorship has brought in \$5,400 for the Northern Green Expo Booth Challenge; \$11,450 for 2010 MGCSA monthly meetings and the March Mega-Seminar, and \$10,600 for Hospitality Night in San Diego during the Golf Industry Show.

MGCSA has received dues from 92 Golf course and 22 Affiliates. Donations totalled \$700. Dave Krupp donated \$500, which makes his donations for 2009 total \$2,500.

Jeff Ische, Eric Counselman and Diegnau attended the Joint Programming Board for the Northern Green Expo. This Board consists of MTGF, which is eight Allied Associations, and MNLA, which are nine committees. Paul reported that there were 5,700 attendees at the 2010 Green Expo compared to 6,700 during the 2009 Expo. Paul Eckholm made a motion to approve the purchase of 250 folders for the March Mega Seminar, Rick Traver, 2nd, approved.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Matt McKinnon, Secretary*

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